2: McCulloch E-4 (1945-51)1952 FP13 Mbundu FP13

Ovimbundu women braid their hair neatly in strands across their foreheads, and decorate the braids with small blue and white trade beads.[1] 342

MAIN FEATURES OF ECONOMY

AGRICULTURE[2]

Main crops are maize and several kinds of beans. Subsidiary crops include: sorghum, kaffir corn, emmer wheat, manioc, peanuts, squash, sweet potatoes, garden vegetables, a little rice, cotton, sugar-cane and tobacco. Fruit-trees such as the papaya, banana, loquat, tangerine, lemon, peach and apple, are increasingly cultivated, and, to some extent, coffee. Upland fields for the principal crops of maize and beans are cultivated during the rainy season, and, to piece out the harvest, river gardens for secondary crops are used in the dry season. 241

The principal corn-gardens

Traditionally men work with their wives in the heavier labour of clearing new fields, but today the demands of contract labour are such that few are able to help.[3] Before the rains begin in early September, women prepare the fields for planting. If a new plot is to be used, it is first cleared with a small hatchet. Tree stumps are left two or three feet high; after the field has been cultivated for a year or two and the tree-stumps have dried and rotted, they are burned off and cleared away. When the rainy season has set in and the ground is thoroughly wet, the main corn-fields are planted. The ground is dug with a hoe and ridged slightly, the ridges following the contour of the land, so that the rain will not wash away the soil, and so that the moisture will be held. Occasionally irrigation is used, small channels being led from hillside streams to the gardens. Maize is dropped by hand on the ridges, and the seeds covered with the foot. Beans and squash are planted with the corn. In January there is usually a break in the rains, and this is the time when the bean crop ripens. (This is a critical period, since if the dry spell lasts too long the corn crop is blighted, but if it is too short the beans will not ripen.) The vines are pulled up and put in the field hut to dry. Later the beans are beaten out of the pods and stored. 241 [342]

In each field there is a grass hut, which is used as a shelter from showers, as a place for drying beans or corn, and as living quarters when the corn is sprouting. (When a woman decides that it would be more convenient to live by her field, which requires constant guarding against birds, she may live in her field hut with her children for several weeks.) 241 343

As the dry season commences, the corn crop ripens. When it is ripe, it is plucked, dried and shelled, and stored in the cotio, a granary on posts, for future use. One cotio is used for each household. When required, the corn is boiled and pounded into the meal which forms the staple food.[4] [257] [252]

(1) Bumby pp.129-32, and illustrations; Childs, personal communication.
(2) Cashmore, 1946, pp.73-8; Bumby, (3) 1954, pp.146-8, and Childs, personal communication. (3) Childs, personal communication.
(4) For a good description of the preparation of corn-meal, see Cashmore, pp.77-8.

IV. PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

142 Among the Ovimbundu there are two main physical types. One of these is of brown skin color and slender build. In this type the calves and thighs are poorly developed, and the chest girth is slender in keeping with the general development. In general the physical 144 characteristics are distinctly different from those of a typical West African Negro as represented by the Kru and the Ibo tribes.

The Ovimbundu are Bantu Negroes who possibly result from a crossing of Hamites and true Negroes, a hypothesis which would account for both the light-colored slim type and the shorter, darker, more sturdy type. But E. Torday (Herbert Spencer, Descriptive [114] Sociology of African Races, London, 1930, Preface, p. iii) thinks that differences of physique among Sudanic and Bantu Negroes are sufficiently accounted for by isolations and environmental differences. Torday denies the need for postulating an infusion of Hamitic blood, but his opinion is opposed to that which has found general acceptance.

The darker Ovimbundu with more facial hair may represent an infusion of Vachokue blood because there was warfare between the Ovimbundu and the Vachokue of eastern Angola with the result that some of the latter were taken as slaves. Types of the Ovimbundu are shown (Plates LII–LIV).

The Vasele, an Umbundu-speaking people of west-central Angola, 101 form a linguistic and cultural pocket because of their isolation in 142 rugged country. Their physique shows no pronounced differences [304] from that of the Ovimbundu, but the methods of scarification, tooth mutilation, and personal ornament are in distinct contrast with those of the Ovimbundu. The Ovimbundu have only a V-shaped notch in the two upper central incisors, whereas the Vasele chip all their teeth to points (Plate LXXVI, Figs. 1, 2).

[302] The Luvando of southwest Angola resemble the Ovimbundu in general physique, though the great difference in hairdressing and personal ornament is likely to give a contrary impression (Plate LIX, Figs. 1, 2).

The Vabeneca are particularly well developed (Plate LXII, Figs. 1, 2). Not until Mongua is reached does one find a people who are distinctly different from the Ovimbundu in all respects. The Vakuanyama of Mongua are noticeably tall and slim, much taller and slimmer than the Ovimbundu, while their physiognomy is more refined (Plates LXIII; LXVIII, Fig. 2). The Vakuanyama are a pastoral tribe whereas the Ovimbundu are principally agricultural.

301 The new ornaments had acquired no sentimental value, therefore
321 their price was moderate.

[171] *Omba* shells are to be seen in use from Kipungo southward through Huila, among the Luvando, and among the Vakuanyama of southern Angola. In the places mentioned one may judge the social status [554] of a woman by the number of *omba* shells she wears. A principal wife is usually well supplied with these ornaments.

●302 In this southern journey it was noticeable that there was an
171 increasing use of red pigment which is lavishly employed for smearing [294] every kind of ornament, the body, and the hair. Leather belts and skirts of Vakuanyama women are thickly coated with red pigment which is invariably mixed with grease. The red powder is prepared [824] by desiccating a red wood called *tukula* by the Vakuanyama, a name which is used through Angola and the southern Congo area.

412 From Kipungo southward through the Vakuanyama country
171 there is a notable absence of decorative wooden hair combs. On the contrary, delicately carved combs are used by both men and women of the Ovimbundu. The Vasele make such combs, but by far the best [532] examples are made and used by the Vachokue tribe of eastern Angola. Here the decorative design usually includes a well-carved human figure at the top of the comb.

301 Among the Vakuanyama, necklaces of disks made from ostrich
[237] eggshell are worn by the women only. A woman of importance has [551] a dozen loops of such necklaces, each loop being about 125 cm long. These necklaces are so greatly esteemed that only after much persuasion can a woman be induced to part with a single link. Perhaps, as is the case with *omba* shell, there is more than the intrinsic value to be considered. One point is constantly noticed in considering social status and ornament. All the wives of a wealthy man, especially among the Vakuanyama, are made to advertise their husband's position by the profusion of their ornaments and the quality of their leather skirts and belts.

[321] There is, in addition to the necklaces of ostrich-eggshell beads, a highly prized necklace made from small perforated disks of shell having a diameter of about a centimeter. The Vakuanyama women smear a necklace of this kind with grease and *tukula* powder; the [435] value of a necklace 125 cm long is equivalent to that of an ox. In describing these necklaces there is interest in noting that they are traded to the south of Angola from places six hundred miles to the [439] north; therefore their value is to some extent dependent on rarity and distant origin.

3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FF13 Mbunda FF13

Young unmarried girls of the Luvando tribe wear a large number of leg-bands which extend from the ankles to the knees as a sign that puberty has not been reached. These leg-bands are somewhat roughly twisted from fibrous roots and twigs from which the cortex has been removed. Collars of tough, elastic, cane-like substance are worn by Luvando women, and so numerous are these that the neck is entirely covered. These cane neck-bands are ornamented with burned, incised, geometrical patterns, and, in keeping with other ornaments, are thickly smeared with grease and red powder from *tukula* wood (Plate LIX, Figs. 1, 2).

Women of the Vakipungo and Vakuanyama wear heavy coils of brass or copper wire on their forearms. In southern Angola women wear bracelets of twisted wire which are identical with those worn by Zulu women. Bracelets of beaten trade brass, ornamented with incised geometrical designs, are worn by women of the Ovimbundu, Vakuanyama, Luvando, and Vakipungo tribes. Ovimbundu women now depend largely on trade goods for personal ornament.

Ovimbundu men and women are dressed in trade cloth. Unmarried girls wear one piece of cloth which hangs from the armpits to the knees. A married woman drapes herself with two pieces of cloth, a skirt hanging from her girdle, and an upper piece so folded as to hold her baby tightly to her back. Men wear a single piece of cloth as a skirt; the upper part of the body is bare (Plates XLIX–LI). From the region of Kipungo to the southern border, clothing is of leather. The Vachokue wear trade cloth or bark cloth.

Hairdressing is of many styles. Ovimbundu women braid their hair neatly in strands across their foreheads, and small blue and white trade beads are used to decorate the braids. The hairdressing of the Ovimbundu women is different from that in any other part of Angola. At an early age the hair is trained into two long loops at the back of the head. Then these are covered with black cloth which is bound tightly. The two loops are afterwards studded with brass-headed tacks obtained from a store (Plate XL, Fig. 3).

Luvando women in the region of Kipungo dress the hair to form a large triangular projection from the back of the head. Girls of the Vaheneca tribe near Huila mass the hair with clay to form large "cock's combs." Women of Gambos pass each small plait of hair through hollow reeds. Humbe women do not redden or grease their hair which is massed into three high ridges on the top, while at the sides there are hornlike projections. Vakuanyama women dress their hair with grease and *tukula* powder. A principal wife builds up her

3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

302 [595] 171 A principal wife builds up her hair into five high cones. Vachokue women mass their hair into separate balls shaped and held by clay and red coloring matter. I know of no hairdressing for Vachokue men, but ornamental wooden combs are sometimes used.

304 In only one place have I seen a nose pin worn, namely, the Esele country of Vila Nova de Selles. The fashion is out of date, but women of only twenty-five years of age have the septum of the nose bored; evidently the custom has not been obsolete for a long period (Plate LXXV, Fig. 1).

177 439 301 The most popular European importations are blue cloth with white spots, metal hair combs, beads, and bright metal crosses bearing a figure of the Virgin Mary with the infant Jesus. This ornament has penetrated to districts far away from Christian missions, and its wide dispersal shows that a newly introduced and attractive ornament from a foreign source may readily be accepted by tribes of different cultures.

517 301 There are interesting points of psychology in the attitude of the Ovimbundu toward European importations. Only a few patterns of cloth are favored, and there is no sale for any other design. Some designs are thought to be appropriate for young girls while others are favored by older women. The same may be said of colored beads, for whereas both blue and white beads are the usual decoration for young women and immature girls, red beads are worn chiefly by the elderly women.

178 A consideration of personal ornament establishes the general truth that in scarification, hairdressing, tooth mutilation, the use of red powder and grease, the anointing of the hair with palm oil, and the wearing of trade cloth, leather, or bark cloth, there is little exchange of styles. There are diffusions in language and other cultural traits, but decorative elements which have for a long period been regarded as distinctive of tribal life are rigidly preserved.

3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

mony at which the older initiates dance while the novices clap their hands.

I witnessed the dance of initiated boys at Ngongo, where the costumes resembled those I had seen at Katoko. At night a youth brought for me a set of initiation costumes (Plate LXXVIII, Fig. 1), which resembled those worn during the dance; this he did with great secrecy.

While at Ngalangi, the initiation of girls was investigated. After several days of negotiation with a village headman three female guardians of the girls came from the bush. The illustrations (Plate LXXVII, Figs. 1, 2) show the attitudes of these women and their decoration. There were three male drummers in the orchestra and several women, who sang and clapped their hands. On emerging from the bush the females moved toward the orchestra with their backs toward the players. As there were about two hundred yards to cover, this slow backward movement occupied a long time, since the three women did not take more than a few inches at each step. The dance itself was a slow, shuffling, swaying movement, made while the bodies of the performers remained inclined forward and their heads were bent so that it was almost impossible to see their faces. The women wore no clothing except loin cloths. Each female was plastered from head to foot with alternate bands of red and white clay smeared thickly. These three females are the women who act as instructors for the girls during isolation in the bush where they receive sexual and domestic instruction.

The seclusion of girls covers a period of one month. During this time the novices suffer no harsh treatment though an operation is performed, possibly excision of the clitoris, but I am not certain on this point. It was also stated that a corncob is introduced into the vagina. The tribe practising this ceremony for girls was the Vanyemba, living close to the Ovimbundu at Ngongo near Ngalangi in central Angola.

In order to corroborate further the two accounts of initiation ceremonies for boys I journeyed to Cangamba in Moxico, eastern Angola. The position of the two first centers visited (Katoko and Ngongo) is on the border line where Ovimbundu and Vachokue mingle, and although there is a mixture of these and other tribes at Cangamba, the culture, language, and physique of the Vachokue predominate. A description of the circumcision ceremonies witnessed at Cangamba is given below for comparison with the accounts resulting from visits to Katoko and Ngongo.

4:Dorsey E-4, 5 (no date)1899 FP13 Mbundu FP13

791 759 case of sickness. He is also a diviner, reading both the past and future. At all spirit feasts, at the installation of a new chief, in preparation for war, and on almost every occasion the witch-doctor plays a prominent part. He bears an influential position among his people, and his art is the source of a considerable income, for always before he begins operations the pay must be brought and laid down before him. Thus it is that he is loth to part with even a few of his charms, much less a full set.

The ocimbanda does not inherit his power, but must serve a long apprenticeship to some old witch-doctor, whom he pays liberally. He is then given a small basket with a few charms, to which he adds from time to time. His idols and charms are not made by him, but [778] are purchased one by one. All of these objects are considered powerful, *cikola* or sacred, and the common people are afraid to touch them; even the touch of a white man is sacrilegious. One of the distinguishing features of a witch-doctor's costume is a headdress, *ekufue*, made of long porcupine quills fastened together at one end, sewn to a cloth disk about two inches in diameter. Many of the quills are over a foot in length. This headdress is only worn when divining. He also occasionally wears about the loins a girdle, *uya*, consisting of a strip of antelope skin sewn together along the two edges, thus forming a pouch which contains medicines. Attached to the girdle are war charms and medicines, of which he eats from time to time. There are also several kinds of small skins in the collection, on which the doctor kneels when about to perform. [302] Two pigments should also be noticed. The first is a white, clayey substance, *ocikela*, with which the ocimbanda paints himself, and with which he also marks the person whom by his divining he has discovered to be innocent, the sign of acquittal being a mark across the forehead and down the arms. The other pigment is a red clay, *onongo*, with which he also marks his own body and employs as the sign of guilt.

787 415 Of the various objects of the ocimbanda's outfit proper, the most important is the basket, *uhamba*, in which the outfit is kept. When it is said that so and so has a "uhamba," it means that he is a witch-doctor. The basket is thirteen inches high by nineteen in length, and eight inches in thickness. The ends are rounded, thus giving the basket, as seen from above, an elliptical form. The cover, three inches in height, fits closely down over the basket, after the manner of our telescope bag. The bottom of the basket is made separate, and is fastened by means of an interlacing of grass braid. The sides of the basket are simply one long strip of interlaced reed and bark fibre, the ends overlapping and being fastened together by the grass braid, which passes up continuously from the bottom to

[i.e., diviner. -- Analyst]